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Sept 11 '86  
Worcester Gazette

# Asbestos victims to vote on Manville

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

The best chance for people suffering asbestos-related diseases to recover compensation for their illnesses from the Manville Corp. is to vote on a reorganization plan for the company, a lawyer for the victims says.

As many as 40,000 current and former workers with lung ailments caused by exposure to asbestos fibers are eligible to submit ballots on the reorganization over the next two months, attorneys said yesterday.

Manville, which was once the nation's largest asbestos producer but no longer produces the fire retardant, filed for Chapter 11 reorganization in August 1982. That came after more than 16,500 asbestos disease victims filed per-

sonal injury lawsuits against it seeking more than \$12.5 billion.

Elihu Inselbuch, counsel for the court-appointed victims committee, said yesterday that settlements or litigation of those claims — already held up for more than four years — plus thousands of others could begin as soon as 12 months after the reorganization plan is put into effect.

A vote on the reorganization by asbestos victims and other creditors of the Denver-based forest and building products company was approved last month by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Burton Lifland in New York.

Inselbuch called the reorganization plan "the best chance for fair compensation to present and future asbestos health victims."

All ballots must be postmarked

by Nov. 14. Lifland has scheduled a Dec. 15 hearing on confirmation of the plan.

Among asbestos victims eligible to vote are those who:

- Filed suits against Manville before its initiation of bankruptcy proceedings four years ago.

- Have filed claims since then against other companies because Manville was immune under the Chapter 11 action.

- Potential claimants who have not filed suit but who can provide a written diagnosis from a physician saying they have an asbestos disease.

## VICTIMS' TRUST

The reorganization plan would establish a victims' trust initially funded at \$815 million with total funds available to it to liquidate and settle the health claims expected to reach \$2.5 billion over 27 years.

Beginning in 1990 and for the following 23 years, Manville would make annual cash payments of \$75 million into the trust, which also would be entitled to 20 percent of

the company's pre-distribution profits.

The trust, to be administered by six trustees independent of the company, also would assume ownership of 50 percent of Manville's common stock plus preferred stock that later could be converted into an additional 30 percent of common stock.

He said investment bankers hired to advise the victims committee calculated that the pool of cash available for health claims if the company were liquidated would total \$500 million to \$900 million less than under the reorganization.

Because asbestos diseases can have a latency period of 30 years, thousands of more claims are expected in the future. The government estimates that more than 4 million workers have been exposed to asbestos since World War II.

Unions representing asbestos workers said they have not decided whether to endorse the reorganization plan.



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